

## **ENHANCING HCV TREATMENT IN THE TRANSITION SPACE: HEPATITIS C PROBATION AND PAROLE PILOT IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND**

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**Background/Approach:** People who inject drugs (PWID) are overrepresented in prison populations. The overall HCV prevalence in prisons is 30%, and 60% among those who inject drugs compared to the general population.

A genuine interest facing prisoners on release from correctional institutions is the effective linkage to health services in the community. This sometimes includes the transfer of health records and medications and can be a difficult time for ex-prisoners trying to re-establish health care and maintain treatment or management of their HCV infection and liver health.

**Analysis/Argument:** Hepatitis Queensland delivered a pilot project in the probation and parole space from January – June 2019. Four district offices in South East Queensland have been included in the pilot - Brisbane Central, Ipswich, Inala and Caboolture. These offices have been identified as regions with a high prevalence of hepatitis C positive clients.

Through the facilitation of 30 minute workshops at each centre covering the basics of HCV and how to support clients in accessing treatment in the community the aim is to upskill the workforce and better enhance the health pathway for parolees.

**Outcome/Results:** Linkages to community HCV treating doctors and programs, awareness posters in the interview rooms and distribution of resources have proven to be successful in raising awareness regarding treatment availability in the community and, for those who are unaware, that they have HCV information that new DAA treatment offers a cure. Coordination of health services and community providers promotes positive re-entry outcomes and produces benefits beyond an individual's health.

**Conclusions/Applications:** Initiatives to provide continuity of HCV treatment upon release are essential, yet providing uninterrupted continuity of care from correctional facilities to the community is challenging. This pilot project shows it is possible to support prisoners upon release to access HCV treatment in the community by establishing strong community health linkages to probation and parole.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement (example):** Hepatitis Queensland operated this project as part of the core business funding. No pharmaceutical grants were received in the development of this project.